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remain substantially on the center line when the bridges 58 to 61 deform. --

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 13 to 26, 30, 31, 47, 52, 53 and 54 as follows:

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2. (Amended) A progressive die [Apparatus] according to Claim 3, wherein said die [slot cutting station] further comprises pilot cutting means for cutting at least one pilot hole in said discs, and said [intermediate stations comprise] additional die station comprises pilot pin means being shaped to extend through said pilot hole for orienting said discs in said [intermediate stations] additional die stations.

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3. (Three Times Amended) A progressive die for shaping a consecutive series of adjacent discs from a strip of relatively stiff material, each of said discs having a geometric center, said strip having a longitudinal center line and said geometric centers falling substantially on said center line, said die comprising a series of adjacent die stations which receive said strip and which shape said discs, said die including means for enabling changes in the distances between said geometric centers of said adjacent discs while maintaining said geometric centers substantially on said center line, said means for enabling changes comprising slot cutting means for forming at least one laterally extending slot between adjacent discs while leaving at least two narrow deformable bridges connecting said adjacent discs, said bridges having a lateral width and thickness sufficient to enable deformation thereof to either increase or decrease the distance between said geometric centers of said adjacent discs, at least one additional die station [said intermediate stations] following said slot cutting means and including cutting means for shaping said discs, and said slot cutting means forming at least [some] one of said bridges with portions which are disposed at an angle relative to said center line to facilitate said deformation.

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4. (Twice Amended) [Apparatus] A progressive die according to Claim 3, wherein said bridges have the shape of a chevron.

7. (Three Times Amended) Apparatus comprising a strip of relatively stiff material including a series of consecutive discs formed along the length thereof, each of said discs including a center and said centers falling substantially on an imaginary center line of said strip, at least two adjacent discs having at least one laterally extending slot therebetween forming at least two narrow deformable bridges connecting said adjacent discs, said bridges having a lateral width and thickness sufficient to enable deformation thereof to either increase or decrease the distance between said centers of said adjacent discs while maintaining said centers substantially on said center line, and at least [some] one of said bridges including portions which are chevron-shaped [at an angle relative to said center line].

8. (Twice Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein both of said two narrow deformable bridges include portions which [have a] are chevron shaped [shape].

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13. (Three Times Amended) A process for punching a series of shaped discs from an elongated strip of relatively stiff material formed by pairs of adjacent discs, comprising the steps of simultaneously cutting and shaping said series of shaped discs at a plurality of stations including a slot cutting station and a plurality of intermediate stations, said discs and said stations having centers, said stations and said strip having an imaginary center line and said centers falling substantially on said center line, cutting at said slot cutting station at least one slot through said strip between each pair of adjacent discs, said slot forming at least two narrow deformable bridges connecting each pair of adjacent discs, orienting said discs at said intermediate stations while shaping said discs between said bridges at said intermediate stations, and [adjusting] enabling the distances between said pairs of adjacent discs at said intermediate stations to be adjusted by simultaneously deforming said bridges while maintaining said centers of said discs substantially on said center line when the distances between said centers of said discs differ from the distances between said centers of said stations, each of said discs having outer sides, and further comprising the step of engaging said outer sides of a [each] disc [while] which is adjacent said slot cutting station and thereby orienting [each] said disc at said slot cutting station while cutting said at least one slot.

14. (Three Times Amended) A process for punching a series of shaped discs from an elongated strip of relatively stiff material formed by pairs of adjacent discs, said strip having a longitudinal center line, comprising the steps of simultaneously cutting and shaping said series of shaped discs at a plurality of stations including a slot cutting station and a plurality of intermediate stations, said discs and said stations having centers, said stations and said strip having an imaginary center line and said centers falling substantially on said center line, cutting at said slot cutting station at least one slot through said strip between each pair of adjacent discs, said slot forming at least two narrow deformable bridges connecting each pair of adjacent discs, orienting said discs at said intermediate stations while shaping said discs between said bridges at said intermediate stations, and[, when necessary, adjusting] enabling adjustment of the distances between said pairs of adjacent discs at said intermediate stations by simultaneously deforming said bridges while maintaining said centers of said discs substantially on said center line when the distances between said centers of said discs differ from the distances between said centers of said stations, each of said two bridges having sides, and further comprising the step of forming said sides of at least one of said bridges at an angle relative to said center line.

15. (Twice Amended) A process for punching a series of shaped discs from an elongated strip of relatively stiff material formed by pairs of adjacent discs having center-to-center distances, said strip having a longitudinal center line, comprising the steps of simultaneously cutting and shaping said series of shaped discs at a plurality of stations including a slot cutting station and a plurality of intermediate stations, said stations having center-to-center distances, cutting at said slot cutting station at least one slot through said strip between each pair of adjacent discs, said slot forming at least two narrow deformable bridges connecting each pair of adjacent discs, orienting said discs at said intermediate stations while shaping said discs between said bridges at said intermediate stations, and enabling adjustment of said center-to-center distances between pairs of adjacent discs at said intermediate stations by simultaneously deforming said bridges when said center-to-center distances of said discs differ from said center-to-center distances of said stations, each of said two bridges having sides, and further comprising the step of forming said sides of at least one of said bridges at an angle relative to said center line. [A process according to Claim 14, wherein] said sides of said at least one of said bridges being [are] formed to a chevron shape.

16. (Twice Amended) A process according to Claim 13, [wherein said strip has a longitudinal center line,] and further including the step of cutting two of said bridges at substantially equal distances on opposite sides of said center line.

17. (Three Times Amended) A progressive die and a strip of material, said die including a series of die stations arranged along an imaginary center line, said stations including cutting means for cutting said strip and die pilot means for positioning said strip, the distances between said die pilot means of successive stations being substantially constant, and [a] said strip of material being shaped by said die, [said strip having a longitudinal center line,] said strip including a series of sections and said sections having strip pilot means [adapted to mate] for mating with said die pilot means, each of said sections including a geometric center, the distances between said strip pilot means at times being variable and at times different from said distances between said die pilot means, and deformable bridge means for connecting adjacent sections of said strip, said sections being relatively stiff and said deformable bridge means being sized to deform and thereby adjust the distances between said geometric centers of said sections and said distances between said strip pilot means in order to compensate for said variable distances between said strip pilot means while maintaining said geometric centers substantially on said center line, at least one of said bridge means having portions which are at an angle with said center line to facilitate said deformation.

18. (Twice Amended) [Apparatus] A progressive die according to Claim 3, and further including a plurality of straddle [pilots] pilot means disposed adjacent said slot cutting means for engaging the sides of a selected disc and for properly positioning said selected disc [while forming] during the formation of said slot.

19. (Twice Amended) [Apparatus] A progressive die according to Claim 3, wherein said slot cutting means forms at least four of said bridges, said bridges being spaced apart on opposite sides of said center line.

20. (Twice Amended) [Apparatus] A progressive die according to Claim 19, wherein two of said bridges are provided on each side of and spaced from said center line.

21. (Twice Amended) [Apparatus] A progressive die according to Claim 20, wherein at least one of said bridges has [have] a chevron shape.

22. (Twice Amended) A progressive die and a strip of material, said die including a series of die stations arranged along an imaginary center line, said stations including cutting means for cutting said strip and die pilot means for positioning said strip, the distances between said die pilot means of successive stations being substantially constant, and [a] said strip of material being shaped by said die, said strip including a series of sections and said sections having strip pilot means for mating [adapted to mate] with said die pilot means, the distances between said strip pilot means at times being variable and at times different from said distances between said die pilot means, each of said sections including a geometric center, and deformable bridge means for connecting adjacent sections of said strip, said die including a slot cutting means for forming said bridge means, said sections being relatively stiff and said deformable bridge means being sized to deform and thereby adjust [said distances] the distance between said geometric centers of said adjacent sections and said distances between said strip pilot means in order to compensate for said variable distances between said strip pilot means while maintaining said geometric centers substantially on said imaginary center line, said sections having outer sides, and said die further including straddle pilot means [pilots which are engageable] for engaging with said outer sides of at least one of said sections adjacent said slot cutting means and for accurately locating said one of said sections.

23. (Twice Amended) [Apparatus] A progressive die and a strip of material according to Claim 17 [22], wherein at least one of said bridge means has a chevron shape.

24. (Amended) [Apparatus] A progressive die as set forth in Claim 3, wherein said strip comprises motor lamination steel having a thickness of approximately .025 inch, and said die cuts each of said bridges to a lateral width in the range between substantially .050 inch and .070 inch.

25. (Amended) [Apparatus] A progressive die as set forth in Claim 24, wherein said lateral width is substantially .060 inch.

26. (Amended) Apparatus as set forth in Claim 7, wherein said strip comprises motor lamination steel having a thickness of approximately .025 inch, and [said] each of said bridges has a lateral width in the range between substantially .050 inch and .070 inch.

30. (Amended) [Apparatus] A progressive die and a strip of material as set forth in Claim 17, wherein said strip comprises motor lamination steel having a thickness of approximately .025 inch, and each of said bridge means has a lateral width in the range between substantially .050 inch and .070 inch.

31. (Amended) [Apparatus] A progressive die and a strip of material as set forth in Claim 30, wherein said lateral width is substantially .060 inch.

47. (Amended) Apparatus for shaping a series of discs in a metal strip, each pair of adjacent discs in the strip being connected, and the geometric centers between adjacent discs being separated by center-to-center distances, said apparatus comprising a progressive die having a succession of adjacent stations located along an imaginary center line, said geometric centers being located substantially on said center line, said adjacent stations having center-to-center distances which are fixed, and means for maintaining accurate progression of said discs through said stations despite variations in said center-to-center distances of said adjacent discs while maintaining said geometric centers substantially on said center line, said means for maintaining comprising slot [punches] punch means for cutting a plurality of slots which form a plurality of narrow bridges connecting said adjacent discs, said bridges being sufficiently narrow to be deformable to correct for said variations, and pilot means at a station adjacent said slot [punches] punch means for engaging and accurately locating a disc while said slot [punches] punch means are cutting said slots.

52. (Amended) [Apparatus] A progressive die according to Claim 20, wherein at least one of said bridges [have] has an arcuate shape.